

Prabuddha Bharata

वसिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य चराभिबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—Swami Vivekananda.

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CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

XVIII.

[Place—Belur, monastery in a rented house. Year—1898.

Subjects—Swamiji speaks about the Nirvikalpa Samadhi—who are able to return to the world of relativity from that Samadhi.—Statement about the wonderful power of Avatars and arguments in favour of that.—The disciple worships Swamiji.]

The disciple is staying with Swamiji at the garden-house of Nilambar Babu at Belur for the last two days. Many young men of Calcutta are coming to visit Swamiji at this time, so the Math looks astir with activity and wearing a gala appearance. Many religious discussions—how much of energy in religious practice—how many of the ways of relieving the lot of the distressed and poor are being discussed. The Sannyasin Maharajas of the Math are all very enthusiastic and like the attendants of Mahadeva are on the tiptoe of preparedness to carry out the behests of Swamiji. Swami Premananda has taken charge of the worship of Sri Ramakrishna. Arrangements on a grand scale for the worship and offering of sacramental food

have been made at the Math—the *prasad* is always ready to be served to the guests at the Math.

To-day, Swamiji has given permission to the disciple to stay in his room at night. The disciple's heart is overflowing with joy at obtaining this privilege of serving Swamiji. After taking the holy *prasad*, he is serving Swamiji and shampooing his feet, when he spoke to him, "What folly! leaving such a place like this, you want to go back to Calcutta. See what an atmosphere of holiness is here—the pure air of the Ganges—what an assemblage of Sadhus,—will you find anywhere a place like this!"

Disciple.— Sir, as the fruition of great austerities in past lives, I have been blessed

with your company. Now bless me that I may not be overcome by ignorance and delusion any more. Now my mind sometimes is seized with a great longing for some direct spiritual realisation.

Swamiji.— I had also felt like that many times. One day in the Cossipore garden, I had expressed my prayer to Sri Ramakrishna with great earnestness. Then in the evening, at the hour of meditation, I lost the consciousness of the body, and felt that it was absolutely non-existent. I felt that the sun, moon, space, time, ether had all been reduced to a homogeneous mass and then melted far away into the unknown; the body-consciousness had almost vanished, and I had nearly merged in the Supreme. I had just a trace of the feeling of Ego, so I could again return to the world of relativity from the *Samadhi*. In this state of *Samadhi* all the difference between "I" and the "Brahman" goes away, everything is reduced into unity, like the waters of the Infinite Ocean—water everywhere, nothing else exists—language and thought, all fail there. "Beyond mind and speech"—this state is then realised in its actuality. Otherwise, so long as the *Sadhaka* (religious aspirant) says, "I am the Brahman," then "I" and "the Brahman," these two entities persist—there is the involved semblance of duality. After that experience, even after trying repeatedly I failed to bring back the state of *Samadhi*. On informing Sri Ramakrishna, he said, "If you remain day and night in that state, the work of the Divine Mother will not be accomplished; therefore you won't be able to induce that state again; when your work is finished, it will come again."

Disciple.— On the attainment of the absolute and transcendent *Nirvikalpa*

Samadhi, can none return to the world of duality by means of the consciousness of Egoism?

Swamiji.— Sri Ramakrishna used to say that Avatars alone can descend to the world (from the state of *Samadhi*) for the sake of the good of the world. Ordinary *Jivas* do not; immersed in that state, they remain alive for a period of twenty-one days, after that their body drops like a dry and dead leaf from the tree of *Samsāra*.

Disciple.— When in *Samadhi*, the mind is merged—and there remain no waves on the surface of consciousness, where then is the possibility of mental activity and returning to the world by the help of the consciousness of Ego? When there is no mind, then who, and by what means, will descend from *Samadhi* to the worldly relativity?

Swamiji.— The conclusion of the Vedānta is that when there is absolute *Samadhi* and cessation of all modifications, there is no return from that state; as the Vedānta Aphorism says: "There is non-return, from scriptural texts." But *Avatars* cherish a few desires for the good of the world. By taking hold of that thread they come down from the super-conscious to the conscious state.

Disciple.— But, Sir, if one or two desires are retained, how can I call that the absolute, transcendent *Samadhi*? For the scriptures say that in the absolute *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, all the modifications of the mind and all desires are suppressed and killed out.

Swamiji.— How then can there be projection of the universe after *Mahapralaya* (final dissolution)? At *Mahapralaya* everything is merged in the Brahman, but after that one hears and reads of creation in the scriptures, that projection

and contraction into causal form of the universe go on in wave forms. Like the recreation and dissolution of the universe after Mahapralaya, Samadhi and the arising out of it, of Avatars, also stand to reason.

Disc.— If I say, at the time of dissolution the seeds of re-creation remain potentially merged in Brahman; it is not absolute dissolution or Nirvikalpa Samadhi but assumption of the seed-form of creation, or as you say its potential form only.

Swamiji.— Then I shall say that in Brahman there is no shadow of any qualification—It is unaffected and unqualified; how is it possible for the projection of the universe to arise from It? Answer me that.

Disciple.— This is only a seeming projection. The reply to the question is given in the scriptures in this way, that the manifestation of creation from the Brahman is only an appearance like the mirage in the desert, but really there has been no creation. From the existent substance Brahman, through the power of the non-existent and false Maya, this illusion is produced.

Swamiji.— If the creation is false then you can also regard the Nirvikalpa Samadhi of Jiva and his return therefrom as seeming appearances. Jiva is Brahman by his nature. How can he feel the fact of bondage? That you want to realise "I am the Brahman" is also an hallucination in that case—for the scripture says, "You are already that." Therefore, "this is your bondage (of ignorance) that you desire to practise to attain to Samadhi."

Disciple.— This is a great dilemma. If I am the Brahman, why don't I always feel as such?

Swamiji.— In order to attain to that

realisation in the conscious plane (in the subject-object world), some instrumentality by which the realisation will be possible is required. Mind is that instrumentality in us. But mind is a non-intelligent substance. It appears to be intelligent by the light of the Atman behind.—Therefore the author of *Panchadasi* says—"The mentality of mind appears to be intelligent by the reflection on it of the intelligence of the Atman," hence the mind appears to us like an intelligent substance. Therefore it is certain, by the mind you won't be able to know the Atman, the essence of intelligence. You have to go beyond the mind. As there is no instrumentality beyond the mind—only the Atman exists—there the object of knowledge becomes the same as the means of knowledge; the knower, knowledge and the means of knowledge become one and the same. The real fact is, that there is a state beyond the conscious plane, where the semblance of the duality of knowledge, knower and the object of knowledge does not exist. When the mind is suppressed that state is perceived. It is said to be "perceived" because there is no other word to express that state, there is no language to express the perception of that. Sankaracharya has styled it "transcendent perception" (*Aparokshanubhuti*) When that transcendent perception is attained Avatars descend to the subject-object world and give glimpses of that,—therefore it is said that the Vedas and other scriptures have been compiled from the perception of Seers. The case of ordinary *jivas* is like that of the salt-doll that in attempting to sound the depths of the ocean melted into it. Do you see? The sum and substance is that "You are the Eternal Brahman"—you have only to awake to this knowledge.

You are always already that, only the interception of non-intelligent mind (which is called Maya in the scriptures) is hiding the knowledge. When the mind composed of subtle matter is quelled, the Atman will be effulgent by its own radiance. That mind or Maya is an illusion, one proof is that mind by itself is non-intelligent and of the nature of ignorance. By the light of the Atman behind, it appears to be intelligent. When you will understand this, the mind will merge in the unbroken ocean of intelligence; then you will realise: "This Atman is the Brahman."

Then Swamiji addressing the disciple said, "You feel sleepy, then go to sleep." The disciple fell asleep in a bed adjacent to Swamiji's. Swamiji rose several times in the night from his bed as he did not enjoy sound sleep; the disciple also woke up then and attended to his necessities. In this way the night passed, and in the early hours of the morning the disciple dreamt a wonderful dream, and at break of sleep, left his bed with great joy. After his early morning plunge in the Ganges, the disciple found Swamiji sitting on the long bench on the ground-floor, facing the East. Remembering his dream of last night the disciple felt very eager to worship the feet of Swamiji, and expressing his desire to Swamiji asked for his permission. To his earnest entreaty Swamiji consented; the disciple gathered a few flowers of the *Dhatura* plant and contemplating the indwelling of Mahasiva in the body of Swamiji worshipped him with formal ceremony.

At the finis of the worship Swamiji said to the disciple, "Your *pūja* is finished, but Baburam (Swami Premananda) will be in a rage at your sacrilegious act of worshipping my feet in the flower-tray meant for Sri Ramakrishna's worship." Before his words

were finished, Swami Premananda came there and Swamiji told him, "See what a sacrilege he has committed! With the paraphernalia of Sri Ramakrishna's worship, he has made my *pūja*." Swami Premananda, smiling said: "Well done! Are you and Sri Ramakrishna different?"—hearing which the disciple felt composed and fearless.

The disciple is an orthodox Hindu. What to speak of prohibited food, he does not take food touched by another. Therefore Swamiji sometimes used to call him by the name of "priest." Swamiji, while he was eating biscuits ^{with} his breakfast, told Swami Sadananda, of ^{being} the priest here." Hearing his order, the disciple came to Swamiji, and he gave some things out of his food to him to eat. Finding the disciple without any demur accepting them Swamiji said: "Do you know what you have eaten now, they are made from eggs." In reply, the disciple said: "Whatever may be in it, I have no need to know; eating this sacramental food from you, I have become immortal." Hearing these words, Swamiji said: "I bless you, that from to-day all your egoism of caste, colour, high birth, of religious merit and demerit, may vanish for life!"

Remembering the boundless love and grace of Swamiji towards him unsought, the disciple now feels his human birth to be blessed.

In the evening Babu Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya, Accountant General, came to visit Swamiji. Swamiji was a guest at his house in Madras for many days before going to America and since then he has great love and regard for Swamiji. Mr. Bhattacharya began to ask many questions of Swamiji about India and the West. Swamiji answered his questions and obliging him by much courtesy, said

"Do stay a day at the Math." Manmatha Babu said, "I shall come another day and stay here," and so saying took leave of Swamiji. While descending the stairs, turning to his friend he said, "We knew beforehand at Madras, that he would make

a great stir in the world. Such a man of all-sided genius one does not meet with."

Swamiji came with Manmatha Babu up to the banks of the Ganges, and bidding him farewell paced the lawn for some time and then retired to rest.

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA emphasised a type of religious character which combined the depths of meditateness with the most extensive wide-awakeness to the realities of life; he sought to show in the intense practical activities of the man of action in the world of reality, the working out and manifestation of the same Intelligence, which is roused by the contemplative nature in his most transcendent meditation, his deepest gazes into his inner self. Held down by the external reality, concretised beings as most of us are, we imperatively need the help of the external, external activities and interests, to break our tie to matter and rise to the realms of spirit. If a very externalised man seeks to lift himself to the region of spirit and by suppressing his external activity, by forcibly drawing in his limbs, like the tortoise tucking in its feet, attempts to practise meditation, the result is very deplorable. Even the little intelligence that he had, that was manifesting itself through his hands and feet as activity is killed, and he succeeds in covering himself with more *Tamas*, inertia. The upshot is, as described in the Gita: "He, who restraining the organs of action, sits revolving in his mind, thoughts regarding objects of senses, he, of deluded understanding, is called a hypocrite."

So in the first stages of religious life, we have to learn to be active on the plane of external reality, to take stock of our duties and to see that they are persecuted with unflagging zeal, with unwavering concentration and purity of motive. Concentration has first to be developed by means of solid and external objects to which we are most accustomed which, materially constituted as we are at present, lend themselves more easily to the one-pointedness of mind. If one cannot hold his mind steady among the more tangible objects of the external world, how can he pretend to be awake, to hold his mind steady to the more subtle, elusive and quick-moving images of the mind? That is not to be. From the solid to the fine, from the gross to the subtle is always the progress of the mind.

In the Yoga philosophy, among the different obstacles to meditation, there is mentioned one which is styled in Sanskrit as लय, *laya*. Translated it would mean, the loss or break up of the mind; when the mind, hibernates like cold-blooded animals, as it were, and enters into a comatose condition. There may be an expression of outward calm, stillness of the surface of consciousness, but this calm is not the calm of the depth of life, but the calm of the death of thought. This state comes

very near to the state of "diffuse concentration" of the psychologist James, in which the mind is held passive to the flow of time, and all sorts of thoughts pass over the mind, without its being conscious of or only imperfectly conscious of it. Untrained and inexperienced practisers of meditation become the self-deluded victims of this defection of Yoga-practise.

It is possible no doubt to achieve a one-sided development of character, where the mind has been trained to dwell in the world of thought, with which it is more familiar than with the practical work-a-day life. The example of scholars who live lives buried in books, of philosophers who spend their time in the world of thought, and of a certain type of saints who are absorbed in the thoughts of the Deity, presents the same externals. Their self-oblivion of this external world, the shabbiness of their outward acts, their inexperience of the facts and realities of practical life, form the stock of ridicule of the hard, matter-of-fact, practical man of the world. Again, your practical man, of strong common-sense, manifesting a good deal of activity in the world, showing a wonderful adaptation to practical life, fails woefully if lifted to the plane of thought. There his very practicality drags him down, throws him off from the atmosphere of mental activity and absence of physical work, necessitated by concentrated thinking.

Set over against these types is the shining example of the personality of the Swami Vivekananda. When staying in the monastery of Belur, his presence would make the whole place athrob with activity.

What with teaching and holding classes, with receiving visitors, and holding conversations with them, attending to the minute details of the working of the monastery, answering the big correspondence which the mails brought him, he was always up and doing. He could not endure squalor, perfunctoriness and slipshod methods of work; no half measures satisfied him and nothing short of perfection, utmost attendance to even what we would say trifling details would satisfy him. His demand for persistent effort, for intense attention was relentless, and he would hold a class on the most abstruse subject of philosophy or grammar through hours without suspecting his hearers to be tired. Indeed his natural, easy moods of life represented such an amount of concentrated force and energy as to us would seem a terrible austerity; few could stand in the whirl of activity that he would raise, and it was only by rousing the utmost energy in oneself that one could bide with him. He was so wide-awake and alert in the common work-a-day life that if some one wished to hide some defect of work, or some wrong method of procedure, his sharp vision would at once detect it and he would be caught in the act. As he used to say jocularly, "I have a pair of eyes at the back of my head,"—he seemed to be all eyes and nothing escaped him.

Yet again looking at the other picture of his life,—when he would return to the chapel or his own room and repose for meditation,—one saw the marvellous transit of thought and interest. Quickly, the limbs would relax, the eyes would grow steady, the breath come at longer and longer intervals, the mind would be ingathered, the sound and noise of the world would be hushed, and his soul descend like a plummet

in the unfathomable depths of introspection and lost to the outer world. One who was a few minutes before immersed in external interests and activity, full to the brim of *Rajas*, which would cast into the shade the activity of the most powerful man of action, in a moment sheds all his external interests, draws in the mind without any counter-pull and turns it back on itself. Well might we marvel at this achievement, that it is possible to attain to such a perfection of mind-control, such an intense power of attachment and detachment. He was an exemplification of the text of the Gita: "He who finds rest in the midst of activity and activity in rest, he is the wise amongst men, he the Yogi, he is the doer of all."

How much the Swami worked within the short and intensely lived period of his life, his Life furnishes an unfoldment, and yet how true was he to the eternal and spiri-

tual interests of being! His power of work kept on a par with his thought-life, his mysticism was suffused with intense practicality. From his mind huge work-waves could proceed, without their being able to control his mind at all; he put on and off the garment of work at will. His life was indeed a commentary on Karma-yoga and an embodiment of the secret of work which he preached and practised. "The history of the past has gone to develop the inner life of India and the activity (outer life) of the West. Hitherto these have been divergent. The time has come for them to unite. Let your life be as deep as the ocean, but let it be also as wide as the sky." "It is a curious thing that the inner life is often most profoundly developed where the outer conditions are cramping and limiting. But this is an accidental, not an essential association." (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Part V. P. 1095).

SYNTHESIS OF VEDANTIC THOUGHT

THE three stages of Vedantic thought, dualism, qualified monism and monism stand in relation to one another as successive unfoldments of the same theme of religious thought,—is a thesis which the Swami Vivekananda reiterated with emphasis all through his writings and speeches. The force of his statement was augmented by the fact of his having seen them practically embodied and manifested in the life of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, in the early days of his spiritual novitiate. Having been trained early in the Theism of the early Brahmo Samaj, which held the individual soul as quite distinct from God, he felt a repugnance to the teaching of Absolute Monism

of his Master and used to playfully taunt him on the absurdity of the thought which identified the Perfect, All-powerful Creator with the imperfect, created being. And in later years when personal realisation of the Advaita or Absolute Monism of the Vedanta gave rise to the certainty of conviction and produced a revolution in his thought by changing his whole front to other systems of religious and philosophic thought, he could not understand why his Master could yet find it rational to worship God in the image of Kali, Vishnu, or Siva, when he had attained to the high state of spiritual realisation of the oneness of the individual soul with the Divine; it was sometime before Swami

Vivekananda could catch the thread of tangle and orientate his mind to the viewpoint of the underlying harmony of dualism, quasi-monism and monism.

What struck the Swami in the life of his Master was, as he has himself expressed it "that he was as ardent a *bhakta* and as ardent a *Jnani*, as ardent a Dualist, as ardent an Advaitist." This set him on the track to find out the secret of this wonderful eclecticism, the broad all-inclusive outlook, which embraced all these apparently contradictory phases of religious thought, which not only tolerated by sufferance but accepted them wholeheartedly; nay incorporated in his life, they were woven in the variegated web of a single spiritual life animated by a common principle. He not only accepted the cult of the Ramait, Shaivaite, or Shakta worship, but put his whole soul into the realisation of the aspect of Divinity they represented, identified himself with the thoughts till they manifested as the actuality of living realisation in his life. Still in a different mood all the distinctions and relativity of worshipper and worshipped of dualistic thought would be obliterated, and he would be lost in the contemplation of the ineffable perfection of the Akhanda-Sachchidananda (unbroken ocean of Absolute Knowledge, Bliss, Intelligence), and dilate on the glory and sovereignty of the Shining Self of Man, the Birthless, the Deathless, the Ever Pure and Perfect. The completeness of his identification, the amount of self-effacement with which he would think away a whole system of religious thought and all its implications to which he had long been accustomed, and accept an apparently different order of religious thought which fructified with such quick and marked success in his life is phenomenal; it is revealed in that por-

tion of his period of *Sadhana* when he became a Ramaite, a Shaivaite, a worshipper of Vishnu, and of the cult of Islam by turns. In later life during the period of his ministry his spiritual life was a veritable encyclopædia of religious thoughts, a parliament of religions as it were, in the inexhaustible store-house of which was garnered the inestimable gems of the world's religious thought. By this object-lesson of the unification of the three phases of Vedantic thought in the life of his Master and manifesting harmoniously side by side, Vivekananda was led to enquire into their common meeting ground.

How could one be a sincere dualist, accept all its implications of prayer, worship, devotion to a Being who is conceived as superior to and different from him and yet believe in the inalienable sovereignty of the Para-Brahman, the Universal Self? The dualistic position postulates that the three entities God, Nature, and individual souls are separate and completely distinct from one another, and there is no identity of substance between them, but that Nature and Soul are under the complete control and sovereignty of God. The God of dualism creates Nature and Soul from pre-existing material, and standing superior to them holds indisputable sway. God is only the efficient cause of the universe, not the material and is therefore an extra-cosmic Being who controls Nature and Souls from without just as an absolute monarch wields indisputable authority over the destinies of his subjects. This is the most common-sense view of the universe; for the common-sense view is that everything has an independent existence of its own and will subsist even if everything else is annihilated. From the standpoint of the body or material entities which have nothing in common with one another and which subsist

as absolutely independent and separate individualities, the First Cause or God is bound to be regarded as an Extra-cosmic Being who is distinct from the universe and who rules the universe from without, just as a High Potentate by the might of his absolute power exercises an unquestioning power over his subjects. The dualist's thought is that everything is God's and he owns nothing for himself. If he has wealth, children, home, he thinks that they belong to God, and he is only their trustee. By the practice of this thought, the limits of his confining selfhood melt; by the contemplation of the Personal God, the Creator of the Universe, the Source of Purity, Strength, Bliss and Immortality, these qualities are induced in him, his mind becomes purified, the utter materiality of his thought melts and he rises to a higher plane of vision.

He now rises to the plane of the *mind*. He regards himself not as body but as a mental entity, and the whole universe translates to his consciousness in terms of mind. For the viewpoint of mind gives rise to the consciousness of a Power which impinges on his consciousness from the external and internal world as a power within and without. The idea of an interpenetrating power of which every soul and everything of Nature is a part, is the next phase of religious thought which opens up to the human mind. This phase is represented by the Visishtadvaita or qualified monism of Ramanuja. The final unity of all is not reached yet, because the vision is now determined by the mind which is yet a differentiating principle. The absolute separateness of soul from soul, of every object of Nature from every other which was the postulate of dualism, has now given place to the idea of an inter-relatedness of souls and of objects of

Nature, interpenetrated by a unit Power. The very grasp of the mind of the correlation and interdependence of souls and nature embraces these interrelated phenomena in a higher unity or whole. For the very fact that two things are interrelated, shows that they are embraced in a higher unity, of which they are inseparable parts. Each correlative phenomenon includes and involves its counterpart and are both embraced in a higher unity. So that God is the whole which embraces the correlative individual souls and Nature, and of which they are parts. The relation of these three entities is therefore one of unity-in-difference. The three entities, God, Soul and Nature are one in God, the Whole, but within that unity are the differences of individual souls, and of Nature, which remain eternally distinct. The First Cause or God of qualified monism is a Personal God having a distinctness of His own, but interpenetrating everything in the universe as its inmost soul; He is immanent in everything and everywhere, He contains within Him the individual souls and Nature, which retain their distinctness eternally.

When the mind gets finer and finer so as almost to transcend its own limitations, the third phase of religious thought unfolds before the spiritual vision of man. As the mind discards its qualifying and limiting adjuncts, the differences within the Unity are felt to be unreal and non-eternal and the permanent individuality of souls as parts of Brahman is found to be changing and illusory; there is no permanency in parts, and there is no static individuality in changeful souls qualified by mind; but the real unchanging individuality will be attained only in the Whole, in the Brahman. Nature also has no permanency and no separate existence of

its own. There is only one Existence, the Infinite, the Ever-Blessed in this universe and that is the Brahman, and that is the individual soul, and that is Nature. The three terms God, Soul and Nature are interchangeable; the same which is God, the same is soul, the same is nature, not parts but the whole. All the differences of the universe melt into the conception of a homogeneous whole; souls and nature are not parts of God, but the whole of God; they have no permanent existence as such. There are not parts of the Infinite, but there is one Infinite Existence; and all these distinctions of individuals and nature are only appearances—created by name and form. Take away name and form and they are all one. There is neither Nature nor God nor Soul, but one Infinite Existence out of which through name and form all these are manufactured. Thus is the highest unity reached.

When this vision of Unity and Oneness of existence is reached, we can with its light work back to the previous stages of dualism and qualified monism and reinterpret them with the vision of Advaita. We can fill the old forms with new spirit, transfigure the worship of dualism with the significance of Advaita. The Advaitist worships the only God, his Own Self, the Sachchidananda, the Infinite Ocean of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. He dethrones all other extraneous mythic gods of imagination and poetry, places on the throne his Highest Self or Atman. If he worships he knows he is not worshipping an extraneous being, but his own Infinite Self, the Nearest of the Near. By a previous act of self-determination, he separates himself from his own Self, and worships his own Highest Self. He resolves the unity of his being into the duality of worshipper and worshipped, to express

and manifest in terms of personality the ecstasy of the transcendent love and bliss of his nature.

The essential feature of the Advaitic standpoint is that the explanation of things is sought from a subjective cause, from within the nature of the thing itself; all extraneous explanations are done away with and it is from one self-determining cause, which is self-creating and self-evolving and self-dissolving, that all the duality and manifoldness of the universe is explained. So when the dualist prays to the External God and receives an answer to his prayer, he thinks that he has been helped by an extraneous power; the Advaitist with his vision of unity knows that all answer to prayers is from his own Self, that he has projected his own glorious Self in the form of the extraneous God who answers his prayers, which *seem* to come from an extraneous source necessitated by the standpoint of duality. He enthrones God at his will and his self-surrender to Him is a previous act of self-determination on his part. The Advaitist therefore can play the part of any worship to the perfection. As a dualist he will be able to conform to all the mental attitudes and forms of the dualistic worship, and regard himself as the servant or worshipper of a Personal God, for he knows that he is a slave and worshipper of his Highest Self. The intensity of appeal, the certainty of response from such a view of God will be increased a hundredfold, and the worship of such a God, instead of giving any chance of weakness in us by reason of servile dependence on an extraneous power, will constitute a mine of strength as we know we are one in essence with the God we worship.

The significance of such dualistic worship will not be without pragmatic consequences in the life of the worshipper. The

religion of fear and temptation of enjoyment will have to go. Instead of quaking in fear and crawling on the earth before Him, He will be the nearest of the near, the Beloved of all, the infinite mine of strength, our own Self. The old ideas of begging for things, asking for things from God, 'the shopkeeping worship,' will find no place in the worship of such a God. What can you beg from your Own Self, when you are the Infinite God of the Universe? Prayers for material objects and desires will vanish, but prayers for strength, for light, for knowledge and immortality, in short, for the attainment of our own glorious nature will remain and be placed on sure foundations. Such a God is to be worshipped, without hope of reward and fear of punishment. In dualistic worship which has been strengthened by the idea of the unity, the relation between worshipper and worshipped should be wholly spiritual without any earthly touch or taint of materiality marring its purity; the worship should be wholly in spirit and in truth. For when the worshipper has known that he is one in essence with God, the Infinite Being, in essence the Perfect and Pure, what earthly desires can arise in him tainting the essential purity of his worship; but his worship will only manifest the intense longing of spiritual unification of substances which are in essence One but which have been self-determined into two, to work back to the original unity by a mystic union of souls.

The mystic interpretation of the divine love of Sri Krishna and the Gopees in the Vaishnava scriptures proceeds on lines similar to the above. Vaishnava philosophers explain that Sachchidananda, desiring to enjoy the transcendent bliss of His nature in the form of personality, divided Himself into the dual forms of Sri Krishna

and Radha, and unfolded the play of divine love as embodied in that episode. The reading of that marvellous episode of divine love gives one the impression by its inebriation of love, of the powerful attraction between worshipper and God, the utmost purity of love which loved for love's sake without the hope of enjoyment in heaven and fear of hell, without caring to know anything about God except that He was Infinite Love, that a spiritual substance which is in essence One has been separated, and is now longing to go back to the original unity with a powerful attraction. If the Impersonal being is to be worshipped as a personality it is to be done with a like purity of idea and intensity of attraction, and not in the attitude of servile dependence or quaking of fear.

Here lies the solution of the conflict of the Personal and Impersonal God, of the dualistic and monistic standpoints. Sri Ramakrishna insisted that the love of the devotee for the Lord should be absolutely spiritual without any taint of materiality, that it should be *ahetuki*, for its own sake without any ulterior motive. The human mind works along a graded plane of thought; when it works in the world of relativity, it is presented with the triune vision of knower, knowledge, known; again this is transcended, and the trinity is resumed in the unity of Existence. So long as we see the external world and have the notion of a separate individual soul we must have a Personal God, the sustainer of both; if we see the effect, we must accept a distinct cause; these are the necessities of the same logic; if we take one we have to take the whole triangle, we can not avoid it, as Sri Ramanuja has proved. But when the human mind transcends its limitations and goes beyond Nature, his body and the external world

vanish, and he realises the Infinite Immortal Being, the Akhanda Sachchidananda; he sees the cause and the cause alone; then the conception of monism, I am the Universe or I am the Brahman, flashes into his soul. When Sri Ramakrishna in his highest transcendent mood would forget his body and the universe would vanish, his mind would merge in the Brahman and all would be to him one Infinite, undifferentiated by name and form; again when the mind descending the graded plane of thought would bring him within the subject-object world then would appear to him the triune vision of One Brahman, as nature, soul and the interpenetrating sustainer, 'Ishvara' or Personal God, he would remember himself as a separate soul, and there will be the universe before and with it the Lord. Every hour would notice the swing of his mind from the Many to the One and from the One back to the Many; so that even in the normal consciousness of "I" and "Thou," of the subject-object

world, the force of the knowledge of unity gathered in *Samadhi* would be so paramount that the Unity would peer through all the forms of relative consciousness and look beyond; everything would appear to him as saturated with one Brahman, worship, worshipper and worshipped.

It is with this vision of Advaita that he could accept unhesitatingly all cults of religious worship, the Ramaite, Shaivaite and Vaishnava. He worshipped the Sachchidananda Rama and Sachchidananda Krishna, and it is with the feeling of *abhyas bhakti*, with devotion based on the identity of worshipper and worshipped, that he taught others to worship. This then is the secret of his wonderful eclecticism and the meeting-ground of the three phases of Vedantic thought, dualism, qualified-monism and monism as embodied in his life and manifesting harmoniously, which Swami Vivekananda preached to the world with such emphasis.



EPISTLES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(*Translated from Bengali.*)

CXLII.

Salutation to Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna !

1895.

Dear brother,

Before this I wrote to you a letter which for want of time was very incomplete. R—and H— wrote in a letter from Lucknow that Hindu newspapers were praising me, and that they were very glad that twenty thousand people had partaken of food at Sri Ramakrishna's Anniversary. I could do much more work, but for the Brahmos and Missionaries who have been opposing me un-

ceasingly, and the Hindus of India too did nothing for me. I mean, if the Hindus of Calcutta or Madras had held a meeting and passed a resolution recognising me as their representative, and thanking the American people for receiving me with kindness, things would have progressed appreciably. But it is over a year, and nothing done. Of course I never relied on the Bengalees, but the Madrasses couldn't do anything either. * *

There is no hope for our nation. Not one original idea crosses anyone's brains, all fighting over the same old, threadbare rug,—that Ramakrishna Paramahansa was such

and such,—and cock-and-bull stories—stories having neither head nor tail. My God! Won't you do something to show that you are in any way removed from the common run of men!—Only indulging in madness! * * To-day you have your bell, to-morrow you add a horn, and follow suit with a chowry the day after; or you introduce a cot to-day, and to-morrow you have its legs silver-mounted, and people help themselves to a rice-porridge, and you spin out two thousand cock-and-bull stories—in short, nothing but external ceremonials. This is called in English Imbecility. Those into whose heads nothing but that sort of silliness enters, are called imbecile. Those whose heads have a tendency to be troubled day and night over such questions as whether the bell should ring on the right or on the left, whether the sandal-paste mark should be put on the head or anywhere else, whether the light should be waved twice or four times,—simply deserve the name of wretches, and it is owing to that sort of notion that we are the outcasts of Fortune, kicked and spurned at, while the people of the West are masters of the whole world. * * There is an ocean of difference between idleness and renunciation.

If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the Living God, the Man-God—every being that wears a human form,—God in His universal as well as individual aspect. The universal aspect of God means this world, and worshipping it means serving it—this indeed is work, not indulging in ceremonials. Neither is it work to cogitate as to whether the rice-plate should be placed in front of the God for ten minutes or for half an hour,—that is called lunacy. Millions of rupees have been spent only that the temple-doors at Benares or Brindaban may play at opening and shutting all day long! Now the Lord is having His toilet, now He is taking His meals, now He is busy on something else we know not what. * * And all this, while the Living

God is dying for want of food, for want of education. The banias of Bombay are erecting hospitals for bugs,—while they would do nothing for men—even if they die! You have not the brain to understand this simple thing—that it is a plague with our country, and lunatic asylums are rife all over. * * Let some of you spread like fire, and preach this worship of the universal aspect of the Godhead—a thing that was never undertaken before in our country. No quarrelling with people, we must be friends with all. * *

Spread ideas—go from village to village, from door to door—then only there will be real work. Otherwise, lying complacently on the bed and ringing the bell now and then is a sort of disease, pure and simple. * * Be independent, learn to form independent judgments.—That such and such a chapter of such and such a Tantra has prescribed a standard length for the handle of a bell,—what matters it to me? Through the Lord's Will out of your lips shall come millions of Vedas and Tantras and Puranas. * * If now you can show this in practice, if you can make three or four hundred thousand disciples in India within a year, then only I may have some hope. * *

By the bye, you know the boy who had his head shaven and went with T— from Bombay to Rameswar? He calls himself a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa! Let T— initiate him. * * He had never even met Sri Ramakrishna in his life, and yet a disciple!—What impudence! Without an unbroken chain of discipleship—गुरुपरम्परा—nothing can be done, is it a child's play? To have no connection whatsoever and call oneself a disciple! The idiot! If that boy refuses to go on in the right way, turn him out. Nothing, I say, can be done without the chain of discipleship, that is, the power that is transmitted from the Guru to the disciple, and from him to his disciple, and so on. Here he comes and proclaims himself a disciple

of Ramakrishna,—is it tomfoolery! J— told me of somebody calling himself a brother-disciple of mine. I have now a suspicion that it is that boy. To pose as a brother-disciple! He feels humiliated to call himself a disciple, I daresay, and would fain turn a Guru straightway! Turn him out if he does not follow the established procedure.

Talking of the restlessness of —'s mind, it all means that he has got no work to do. "Go from village to village, do good to humanity, and to the world at large. Go to hell yourself to buy salvation for others. There is no Mukti on earth to call my own. Whenever you think of yourself, you are bound to feel restless. What business have you to do with Peace, my boy? You have renounced everything. Come! Now is the turn for you to banish the desire for Peace, and that for Mukti too! Don't worry in the least; heaven or hell, or Bhakti or Mukti,—don't care for anything, but go, my boy, and spread the name of the Lord from door to door! It is only by doing good to others that one attains to his own good, and it is by leading others to Bhakti and Mukti that one attains them himself. Take that up, forget your own self for it, be mad over the idea. As Sri Ramakrishna used to love you, as I love you, come, love the world like that. Bring all together. Where is G—? You must have him with you. My infinite love to him. Where is S—? Let him join if he likes. Call him in my name. Remember these few points:—

1. We are Sannyasins, who have given up *everything*—Bhakti, and Mukti, and enjoyment, and all.

2. To do the highest good to the world, everyone down to the lowest—this is our vow. Welcome Mukti or hell, whichever comes of it.

3. Ramakrishna Paramahansa came for the good of the world. Call him a man, or God, or an Incarnation, just as you please. Accept him each in your own light.

4. He who will bow before him will be converted into sterling gold that very moment. Go with this message from door to door, if you can, my boy, and all your disquietude will be at an end. Never fear,—where's the room for fear?—Caring for nothing whatsoever is a part of your life. You have so long spread his name and your character all around, well and good. Now spread them in an organised way. The Lord is with you. Take heart!

Whether I live or die, whether I go back to India or not, you go on spreading love, love that knows no bounds. Put S—, too, to this task. But remember one needs weapons to overcome others. "सन्निहिन्ने वरं त्यागो विनाशे नियते सति"—When death is so certain, it is better to die for a good cause.

Yours affly.

Vivekananda.

P. S. Remember my previous letter—we want both men and women. There is no distinction of sex in the soul. It won't do merely to call Sri Ramakrishna an Incarnation, you must manifest power. Where are —? Tell them to spread these ideas. We want thousands of men, and thousands of women, who will spread like wild fire from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from the North Pole to the South Pole—all over the world. It is no use indulging in child's play—neither is there time for it. Let those who have come for child's play be off now, while there is time, or they will surely come to grief. We want an organisation. Off with laziness. Spread! Spread! Run like fire to all places. Do not depend upon me. Whether I live or die, go on spreading, yourselves.

Yours affly.

Vivekananda.



WITH THE SWAMIS IN AMERICA.

I.

IF there were such a thing as accident, I would say that my coming into contact with the Vedanta teaching was purely accidental. It had all the appearance of accident, it came to me unsought, unexpected,—it just happened. Consciously I had nothing to do with it, so far as appearance goes.

In reality I do not believe in accident, at least not in my saner moments. I believe that our lives are guided, that a helmsman steers our boat across the ocean of life. Firmly seated at the helm of our hearts, he catches the wind of our desires and steers the boat accordingly. Little eddies or whirlpools may threaten to throw us to one side, but His steady hand keeps us in the main current,—the deep-seated, flowing desire of our hearts.

Sometimes we mistake these little eddies for the main stream and we rebel when our boat is turned away from them; we are disappointed. But our helmsman, unmoved, steers us onward.

The secret of success lies in one-pointed, all-absorbing, all-sacrificing effort in a given direction. But most of our planning and scheming in life is concerned with the shallow, surface currents of our consciousness. And then there is little progress. Few there are who can discern the deep undercurrent that leads to the goal, whatever that goal may be. And amongst those who do discern what their real aim in life is, there are but few who can withstand the temptation of momentary excursions in different directions. We grasp what lies near at hand, what is easy to attain, what brings immediate enjoyment. And thus we suffer delay.

It is only when we realise the presence of an ever-watchful Guide, that we can resign ourselves to His hands; that putting aside our little likes and dislikes, that giving up our little vain struggles in many directions, we are contented to be guided by Him. Consciously to co-operate with that all-powerful, all-knowing Witness within is given to very few. But whether we realise it or not, consciously or unconsciously, sooner or later our boat is turned back to the right course.

This, perhaps, is one of the first practical lessons that were taught me during my contact with the Swamis. It was not put to me in just that way. It was given to me in very simple language: "Do not plan, Mother's will shall come to pass."

How difficult it is to follow even simple precepts. Still, the truth of it I cannot deny if I think back of how I first met the Swamis. I had not planned, but Mother's will did come to pass.

But one moment! Shall we sit idle then, resting on our oars and let things just happen? By no means! Pull the oars with all our might, we must; turn on full steam. But do not pull against the steersman, pull straight ahead and let the helmsman steer. How easy it sounds: "Let Mother plan; think only of Her!"

Vital truths, it seems, are always put in plain language, homely, without ornamentation. Take Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. Could anything be simpler? But of these simple precepts, he himself has said: "If you follow one sixteenth part of what I tell you, it is enough."

"Take one idea and work it out to its conclusion." It does not seem such a difficult task. Still, the goal is promised us, if we succeed. Have we ever tried it? If so, for how long? The sun is hot, the shade so pleasant. We rest for just one moment, we stretch ourselves on the soft turf, sleep overtakes us and our journey is postponed.

* * * * *

It was in New York, many years ago, that one evening I was one of a small audience listening to an address by the late Mr. Colville. Fluent, sincere, optimistic as Mr. Colville always was, it was a pleasure to listen to him. A good deal of wholesome advice,—a mixture of New Thought, Theosophy and Christian Science. It was what called "a talk under inspiration." Buoyant, hopeful, encouraging, his talk acted like a tonic on a drooping spirit. He followed faithfully the doctrine of his creed, to see good everywhere and in everything. It was often carried to extremes. I

remember, it was a cold, stormy night. Every one was glad to be under shelter. But when Mr. Colville entered the hall, the first remark he made was: "Is not this a glorious evening!" And he seemed to mean it. He rubbed his hands and he looked very happy and comfortable. I could not help smiling. I was a new sheep in the fold and I looked around to see how this extraordinary statement struck the audience. I saw many smiles, someone in the audience straightened up as if to shake off a different impression, every one looked happy. The tonic acted and the effect was remarkable. It felt good to be there. There was no room for pessimism. Pessimism fled by the back door as soon as Mr. Colville entered by the front. His religion was a religion of cheerfulness; no mistake about that.

I have many friends among the New Thought people. And I like them as a class. They are so happy, so energetic, so positive that they have found the secret of success,—the panacea for all the ill-suffering humankind is heir to. But it must be remembered that there is New Thought and New Thought,—Menticulture, Higher Thought, Mental Healing, New Consciousness, Joy Philosophy etc. All do not go to the same extremes. But sometimes they are amusing in their enthusiasm and naïveté. Let me relate one instance. And I do this with due respect for the saner class (to which Mr. Colville belonged) who are sincere and always ready to help their less fortunate brethren. The religion of cheerfulness is not to be despised in an often too sordid world. Optimism is contagious and perhaps the best and only remedy for too phlegmatic and pessimistic temperaments.

Most schools of New Thought teach in one form or another, to put it very shortly, that every one should be healthy, prosperous and happy. Those who are otherwise, are diseased. The remedy for disease is to deny or ignore it, to hold the positive thought that all is well with every one. If you have a headache, forget it. Say and try to believe that you are Divine Mind, that you are in perfect health, that there is nothing wrong with you. The headache will go in no time. If you cannot do that, go to a practitioner, he will hold the thought for you and you will be cured. This is called "treating" a person. The patient has not to do anything; only try to forget the

disease and remain passive. The practitioner remains silent and concentrates his mind on health. "You are Divine Mind. Divine Mind is free from disease; you are free from disease, you are in perfect health." No questions are asked of the patient, he is told not to mention or think of his trouble and to remain calm and silent. The truth seems to be that some people do get cured and that cases have been cured where medical men had given up all hope. Some of the cures seem almost miraculous. So far so good. And when this practice is applied to animals as well as to human beings, we know that animals can be hypnotised, and I see no reason for ridicule. Let our sympathy and help go out to all living creatures. Whether I myself have much faith in the practice or not, is not now the question. It seems that almost any means, even charms, will act as a cure with some people. Neither does it matter now whether we regard a religion of health, wealth and prosperity as a refined form of materialism; where God is made the means and the world the end. I am not now discussing the merit or demerit of the different schools of New Thought. I am writing down some of my early reminiscences and I simply want to relate a funny instance that was brought to my notice many years ago.

A gardener, at one of the New Thought Homes was in difficulty. It was in California. There had been no rain for weeks and the garden was sorely in need of water. But unfortunately the windmill that supplied water for irrigation, refused to work. What could be done? A convert to New Thought does not go to a physician when there is something wrong with the human machine, why should he go to a mechanic when the windmill is out of order? Divine Mind is all-powerful. What the windmill required was "treatment."

The other members of the Home had all gathered for breakfast, when the gardener entered the room and in all earnestness requested that they all go into the silence for a few moments, that the windmill showed symptoms of disorder. "Let us treat the windmill," he said, "let us repeat silently: everything is Divine Mind, there is no disorder in Divine Mind, the windmill is in good working order and ready to give us water." The members acquiesced.

The silence over, our friends were perfectly

confident that water would come. In great expectation they ran into the garden. The windmill was turned on. But, I am sorry to say, this time their faith received a rude shock. The windmill made some faint attempts, squeaked, then balked and stood there. And our simple-minded gardener had to undergo the humiliation of calling in a mechanic to put things aright.

Shortly after, I came to know this gardener and I had my suspicion that he was not quite as innocent as some people thought him to be. Our friend was fond of practical jokes.

Later, this same gentleman stayed with us at the Shanti Ashrama. We had a mare there that roamed about free and was caught only when needed. But she did not like to be caught and as she had one hundred and sixty acres of land to make good her escape, she sometimes gave us considerable exercise before we could corner her.

One day, she had been especially clever in dodging us and we were all pretty well tired out when we roped her. Our friend had done his share in capturing the mare. We were leading her to the shed in triumphant procession. Then our friend called out: "Swami, the mare likes to be free, but we have put the rope around her neck and now she is in Maya (bondage)." The Swami was highly amused at this new application of the word Maya. He laughed heartily and said: "Yes, Mr. P., you are right, we have put the mare in Maya but we ourselves want to get out of Maya. Be careful that you do not meet with the same fate as the mare has met. Cut the ropes and be free!"

Another day the Swami had been telling us that we should try to bring out the divinity that is in us. Afterwards he met Mr. P. and said: "Mr. P., what have you been doing?" Mr. P. had been cooking his dinner and he promptly replied: "Swami, if I cannot succeed in bringing out the divinity that is in me, at least I can try to bring out the cook that is in me and even that I find difficult enough." So much for Mr. P.

And now to continue. Mr. Colville's lecture was over and I was about to leave the hall, when a total stranger accosted me and asked me whether I had ever heard the Swami Vivekananda. "I have never been so fortunate," I replied, "but I have read his book on Raja Yoga." "Well," said the stranger, "he gives lectures at the Mott

Memorial Building. You can hear him there every Sunday at 3 P. M." I thanked my new acquaintance for the kind and welcome information, but I doubted the correctness of his statement. I was under the impression (which later proved to be right) that the Swami Vivekananda had returned to India.

However, the following Sunday afternoon found me amongst the audience at the Mott Memorial Hall, in the expectation of hearing the Swami Vivekananda. The hall was not large, it could seat perhaps three or four hundred persons. And even then the hall was not quite filled, so it was easy to secure a good seat. I had heard much in praise of Swamiji and his "Raja Yoga" had made a deep impression on me. My expectation was therefore tuned to a high key and I looked forward with pleasure to the fulfilment of a long cherished desire.

Punctually at three o'clock a Swami entered the hall. He was dressed in robe and turban of orange color. He went straight to the platform and without a moment's delay began to deliver his lecture. He opened with a Sloka in Sanskrit: "Dvā suparnā sayujā sakhāyā samānam" etc. This he gave also in English: "Two birds of beautiful plumage, ever mates, perch on the self-same tree; one of the twain eats of the luscious fruit; silent its mate looks on." And then he began to explain the deep significance of this beautiful simile from the Upanishads. The discourse was lucid, convincing and impressive. There was not much flourish, not much eloquence, hardly any gesticulation. It was a straightforward, well-reasoned-out exposition of the Vedanta philosophy, delivered in a calm, dignified manner. He had his subject well in hand. And his voice was clear and sonorous.

Young, tall, straight, good-looking, the Swami had his appearance in his favor. His attitude, though not awkward, was a little stiff for a public speaker. There was no effort for effect. The speaker was natural and sincere, but there was not the ease and grace of manner so characteristic of American speakers. It was evident that the Swami had not done much platform work, though speaking seemed to come easy to him.

After the lecture an opportunity was given the audience to ask questions. The Swami answered

all questions without the least hesitation. Then he came down from the platform and was immediately surrounded by a number of people anxious to meet him personally and to exchange a few words with him.

I waited in the back of the hall and saw the Swami pass out to the street. I was very happy to have found a teacher from the land where Vedanta had taken its birth. My expectation had been high and I was not disappointed except that I had not found the eloquence and fine delivery for which the Swami Vivekananda had become famous. I wondered how the Swami had earned his reputation as an orator and I doubted whether the speaker was really the Swami Vivekananda. So I approached a gentleman in charge of the hall to satisfy my doubt. And then I was told that the Swami I had listened to, was the Swami Abhedananda, another disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. I talked a while with the gentleman, who was also in charge of the bookstall, bought a copy of "Karma Yoga" and went home.

I felt greatly attracted towards the Swami and the following Sunday I went to hear him again. In fact, I became a regular attendant at the Sunday lectures. But I did not meet the Swami personally. There was so much that was new to me, it was so much more satisfying than what I had heard from Christian pulpits, there was so much to think about, that I felt satisfied to live my quiet life in obscurity and to get myself adjusted to this new way of thinking and looking at the problems of life. I wanted to work things out for myself and to think and meditate over them. The Sunday lectures were quite sufficient for me in addition to the reading and study of Vedanta that I had begun at home.

But one Sunday, just after the lecture, a lady approached me. She said that she had seen me come to the lectures so regularly, did not I want to make the Swami's acquaintance? "There is a question-class at my home," she said, "the Swami would be glad to meet you there. There are only a few of us and we meet every Wednesday evening. Come and meet the Swami." I accepted this very kind invitation and that very week went to the address given me.

There was a small gathering, perhaps not more than twenty persons. The room was cosy, incense

was burning, on a small table were pictures and flowers. The Swami was already seated and the hostess offered me a chair near him. After a few minutes the Swami opened the meeting with a prayer in Sanskrit. I think it was the well-known invocation at the beginning and at the end of some of the Upanishads: *Saha nāvavatu saha nau bhunaktu saha viryam karavāmahai* etc. "May He protect us from all evil! May the teacher and the taught enjoy together the blessings of the Lord! May whatever we study be well studied and may it enlighten us! May dissension be far from us! Om Peace, Peace, Peace, Hari Om!" How beautiful, how impressive sounded the ancient Sanskrit prayer as it was chanted by the Swami in his deep, melodious voice. How exquisite the intonation!

This was followed by a few minutes of silence. The Swami sat erect, perfectly still, with his hands folded and his eyes closed. We all followed his example and meditated for a while. Then came a few remarks on the law of Karma and we were invited to ask questions. The questions were not systematic; all kinds of subjects were touched on.

"Was Jesus a Yogi?"

"Yes, otherwise how could he have realised his oneness with the heavenly Father!"

"Why do the Sannyasins in India wander about?"

"Because they do not want to be a burden to anyone and to learn perfect reliance on God."

"Does one have to be a vegetarian to practise Yoga?"

"When practising Raja Yoga one should not take flesh. With the other Yogas it is not absolutely necessary to be a strict vegetarian. But in India all the Yogis are vegetarians. Almost all the Hindus are vegetarians."

Then the Swami spoke to explain why the Hindus do not like to take flesh. And so the subjects were various. The meeting lasted for an hour or more. After the meeting I was introduced to the Swami. The Swami was courteous. He asked me a few questions and said that he hoped I could come again. I told him how very much I appreciated his lectures and how helpful they were to me. He seemed pleased. "Practise a little," he said, "the secret of success lies in meditation. Come here regularly and when you are in doubt or you need any help, come to me." I thanked him

and promised to do so. This was the end of our first meeting.

And I marvelled how the Lord was steering my boat in new directions, away from the tumult of an external life on waters peaceful and calm, of greater depth, but safe under His protection. I felt

that in the Swami Abhedananda I had found a teacher who could help me and that my spiritual progress henceforth depended on my own efforts and sincerity under the Swami's guidance and instruction.

A BRAHMACHARIN.

VIVEKACHUDAMANI

(Continued from page 212.)

भानुप्रभासंजनिताभ्रपङ्क्ति-

र्भानुं तिरोधाय विजृम्भते यथा ।

आत्मोदिताहंकृतिरात्मतत्त्वं

तथा तिरोधाय विजृम्भते स्वयम् ॥१४२॥

142. As layers of clouds, generated by the sun's rays, cover the sun and appear solely (in the sky), so Egoism, generated by the Self, covers the Reality of the Self and appears solely by itself.

[*Solely by itself*—as if there were no Atman at all. But the clouds vanish subsequently, and so does egoism too.]

कवलितदिननाथे दुर्दिने सान्द्रमेघै-

र्व्ययति हिमभ्रंभावायुरुग्रो यथैतान् ।

अविरततमसात्मन्यावृते मूढबुद्धि

क्षपयति बहुदुःखैस्तीव्रविक्षेपशक्तिः ॥१४३॥

143. Just as, on a cloudy day, when the sun is swallowed up by dense clouds, violent cold blasts trouble them, so when the Atman is hidden by intense ignorance, the dreadful Vikshepa Shakti (projecting power) afflicts the foolish man with numerous griefs.

[*Blasts trouble them.*—The root व्यय has also a secondary meaning, namely to cause to wander, which is also implied here. The verb क्षपयति in the last line of this verse has also a similar meaning. The foolish man is made to take sometimes very low bodies—that is the meaning.]

एताम्यमेव शक्तिभ्यां बन्धः पुंसः समागतः ।

याभ्यां विमोहितो देहं मत्वाऽत्मानं भ्रमत्ययम् १४४

144. It is from these two powers that man's bondage has proceeded,—beguiled by which he mistakes the body for the Self and wanders (from body to body).

[*Two powers*—viz., the veiling and projecting powers—Avarana and Vikshepa.]

यीजं संसृतिभूमिजस्य तु तमो देहात्मधीरङ्कुरो
रागः पल्लवमम्बु कर्म तु वपुः स्कन्धोऽस्रवः शाखिकाः ।
अग्राणीन्द्रियसंहतिश्च विषयाः पुष्पाणि दुःखं फलं
नानाकर्मसमुद्भवं बहुविधं भोक्तात्र जीवः खगः ॥

145. Of the tree of Samsara ignorance is the seed, the identification with the body is its sprout, attachment its tender leaves, work its water, the body its trunk, the vital forces its branches, the organs its twigs, the sense-objects its flowers, various miseries due to diverse works are its fruits, and the individual soul is the bird on it.

[In this stanza Samsara or relative existence is likened to a tree, and the simile is brought out in detail. The appropriateness of the comparisons will be patent on reflection. It is this kind of composition which shows Sankara not only to be a great philosopher but a true poet also. And such Slokas, as the reader will perceive, abound in this masterpiece of Vedantic literature.

Soul is the bird &c.—Compare the beautiful Slokas of the Mundaka Upanishad (III. i. 1-2)—
“*इह सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया*” &c. With the ripening of Knowledge the two birds coalesce into one, the Self alone remains, and life is known to be a dream.]

अज्ञानमूलोऽयमनात्मबन्धो

नैर्मर्गिकोऽनादिरनन्त ईरितः ।

जन्माप्यव्याधिजरादिदुःख-

प्रवाहपातं जनयत्यमुष्य ॥१४६॥

146. Friend, this bondage of non-Self springs from ignorance, is self-caused, and is described as without beginning and end. It subjects one to the long train of miseries such as birth and death, disease and decrepitude and so forth.

[*Self-caused*—not depending upon any other cause.

Without end—Relatively speaking, that is. On the Realisation of the Self it disappears.]

नास्त्रेन शस्त्रेनित्तेन वह्निना

क्षेत्रं न शक्यो न च कर्मकोटिभिः ।

चिवेकविज्ञानमहासिना विना

धातुः प्रसादेन सितेन मञ्जुना ॥१४७॥

147. This bondage can be destroyed neither by weapons nor by wind, nor by fire, nor by millions of acts—by nothing except the great sword of the Knowledge of discrimination, sharpened by the grace of the Lord, Paramatman.

[*Acts*—enjoined by the Scriptures, and done with motives.

Grace.....Paramatman—An echo of Katha U'pa. I. ii. 20. The Sruti has also a different reading—'धातुमसादात्'—which means 'through the purity of the mind and organs etc.'—This meaning is also suggested here.]

धुतिप्रमाणैकमतेः स्वधर्म-

निष्ठा तथैवात्मविशुद्धिरस्य ।

विशुद्धबुद्धेः परमात्मवेदनं

तेनैव संसारसमूलनाशः ॥१४८॥

148. One who is passionately devoted to the authority of the Srutis acquires steadiness in his Swadharma, which alone conduces to the purity of his mind. The man of pure mind realises the Supreme Self, and by this alone Samsara with its root is destroyed.

[*Swadharma*—lit. one's own duty, or the duty for which we are fit,—which the Gita enjoins on us all to perform, as the way to perfection.

Its root—Ignorance.]

कोयैरन्नमयाद्यैः पञ्चभिरात्मा न संवृतो भाति ।

निजशक्तिसमुत्पन्नेः शैवालपटलैरिवाम्बु

वापीस्थम् ॥१४९॥

149. Covered by the sheaths like the material one and the rest, which are the products of its own power, the Self ceases to appear, like the water of a tank by its accumulation of sedge.

[*The sheaths &c.*—See note on Sloka 125.

They are called sheaths as they are coverings over the Atman which manifests Itself through them. From the *Annamaya* to the *Anandamaya* the sheaths are gradually finer and finer. Knowledge consists in going beyond them all by means of regulated practice and coming face to face, as it were, with the Atman.]

तच्छैवालापनये सम्यक् सलिलं प्रतीयते शुद्धम् ।

वृष्णासन्तापहरं सद्यः सौख्यप्रदं परं पुंसः ॥१५०॥

150. On the removal of that sedge the perfectly pure water that allays the pangs of thirst and gives immediate joy, appears unobstructed before the man.

[The water is not something that is to be *procured* from anywhere else, it is *already* there; only the obstructions have to be removed. So in the case of Atman also.]

पञ्चानामपि कोशानामपवादे विभात्ययं शुद्धः ।

नित्यानन्दैकरसः प्रत्यग्रूपः परं स्थयं ज्योतिः ॥१५१॥

151. When all the five sheaths have been eliminated, the Self of man appears—pure, of the essence of everlasting and unalloyed bliss, indwelling, supreme, and self-effulgent.

[*Eliminated*—Discriminated as being other than the Self.

Indwelling—dwelling within the heart of all.]

आत्मानात्मविवेकः कर्तव्यो बन्धमुक्तये विदुषा ।

तेनैवानन्दी भवति स्वं विज्ञाय सच्चिदानन्दम् ॥१५२॥

152. To remove his bondage the wise man should discriminate between the Self and non-Self. By that alone he comes to know his own Self as Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, and becomes happy.

मुञ्जादिषीकामिव दृश्यवर्गात्

प्रत्यक्षमात्मानमसङ्गमक्रियम् ।

विविच्य तत्र प्रविलाप्य सर्वं

तदात्मना तिष्ठति यः स मुक्तः ॥१५३॥

153. He is free who discriminates between all sense-objects and the indwelling, unattached and inactive Self; as one separates a stalk of grass from its enveloping sheath, and merging everything in It remains in a state of identity with That.

[All sense-objects—specially the body and its organs.

Inactive—the Witness of all activity.

A stalk of grass &c.—Compare Katha Upanishad, II. iii. 17.

Merging &c.—Knowing that only the Atman manifests Itself through name and form.]

देहोऽयमन्नभवनोऽन्नमयस्तु कोश-

आन्नेन जीवति विनश्यति तद्विहीनः ।

त्वक्चर्ममांसरुधिरास्थिपुरीषराशि-

र्नायं स्वयं भवितुमर्हति नित्यशुद्धः ॥१५४॥

154. This body of ours is the product of food and comprises the material sheath; it lives on food, and dies without it; it is a mass of skin, flesh, blood, bones and lots of other filthy things, and can never be the eternally pure, self-existent Atman.

[Product of food—that went to build up the parent-body.]

पूर्वं जनेरधिमृतेरपि नायमस्ति

जातक्षणाः क्षणगुणोऽनियतस्वभावः ।

नैको जडश्च घटवत्परिदृश्यमानः

स्वात्मा कथं भवति भावविकारवेत्ता ॥१५५॥

155. It does not exist prior to birth or posterior to death, but lasts only for a short (intervening) period; its virtues are transient, and it is changeful by nature; it is manifold, inert, and is a sense-object

like a jar (or any other thing); how can it be one's own Self, the Witness of changes in all things?

[Manifold—not a simple, and subject to constant transformations.]

पाणिपादादिमादेहो नात्मा व्यङ्ग्येऽपि जीवनात् ॥
तत्तच्छक्तेरनाशाच्च न नियम्यो नियामकः ॥१५६॥

156. The body, consisting of arms and legs, cannot be the Atman, for one continues to live even when particular limbs are gone, and the different functions of the organism also remain intact. The body which is subject to another's rule cannot be the Self which is the Ruler of all.

[Different functions—other than those directly interfered with.]

देहतद्धर्मतत्कर्मतदवस्थ्यादिसाक्षिणः ।

स्वतएव स्वतःसिद्धं तद्वैलक्षण्यमात्मनः ॥१५७॥

157. That the Atman is different from the body, its characteristics, its activities, and its states etc., of which It is the witness, is self-evident, and needs no demonstration.

[Characteristics—such as stoutness or leanness etc.
States—boyhood, youth etc.]

शय्यराशिर्मोसलिसो मलपूर्णाऽतिकश्मलः ।

कथं भवेदयं वेत्ता स्वयमेतद्विलक्षणः ॥१५८॥

158. How can the body, being a pack of bones, covered with flesh, and full of filth, and highly impure, be the self-existent Atman, the Knower, which is ever distinct from it?

त्वङ्मांसमेदोऽस्थिपुरीषराशा-

वहमति मूढजनः करोति ।

विलक्षणं वेत्ति द्विचारशीलो-

निजस्वरूपं परमार्थभूतम् ॥१५९॥

159. It is the foolish man who identifies himself with a mass of skin, flesh, fat, bones and filth, while the man of discrimination knows his own Self, the only Reality that there is, as distinct from the body.

(To be continued).

IN MEMORIAM: F. J. A.

(Obit July 13, 1917, Detroit, Michigan.)

Swami, you died at dawn, and at that hour of birth.
To meet the sun, as He came out of the East,
Fresh from the high Himalayan snows,
Eastward on wings of day you sped to Ganges' bank,
And there, in white-robed meditation, have
encompassed all.

Since you have gone there is a strange new
radiance in the day,
Or, mayhap, through your joy, at length we see.

The shrunken clay that was your form is again dust,
And on your head, all radiant, shines the eternal light.

Swami, you called me brother, and I had a far
off vision
Of the great brotherhood of man to be.

"Nothing is beautiful which dies," you said,
 "Only that which is eternal, at one with Him,
 is Beauty."

For your clear spirit death has lost its terror,
All sorrow shall be softened for your love.

"I shall be born again," you said, and if there
be aught
In the great persisting dream of gods and men,
you live.

Swami, robed in white and wrapped in meditation,
You wait our liberated souls by Ganges' sacred
stream.

Swami, at last, you live.

LEO J. RABETTE.

In a Garden of Asphodel he sleeps. Why should we mourn the dead with tears and lamentations? I shall weave a garland of flowers for him. I shall place my wreath upon a shrine sacred to his memory.

In my garland there shall be no pale and stain-
less lilies or faint-scented colorless roses. Such
are for children who die young and for placid

souls who touch the surface of life only, knowing neither the heights nor the depths of emotions. For souls are keyed to color and to tone—pale tints and tones predominating. Not of such do I write.

My garland shall be made from flowers of gorgeous hues. The brilliant colors may clash somewhat stridently. But above discord there is harmony. The overtone rises above the theme, and is not Life itself a paradox—supremely inconsistent?

There shall be Red Roses in my garland, red roses in profusion—a riot of roses, deeply rich in color. Their vividness pulsates with the Joy of Life. Their fragrance is vibrant with the Prodigality of Youth. Thorns there may be, but well-concealed in the verdant leafage. Why should you seek to find them? Here and there shall peep out tiny Blue Forget-Me-Nots, mutely pleading for recognition. They will touch your heart with responsive tenderness. And thickly interwoven through the garland is the deep purple of California Violets, exhaling in perfume unfathomed depths of Spiritual Devotion. They dominate all other blooms. That strangely haunting reminiscent fragrance is the mystic odor of Vervein. It has powers mysteriously subtle and alluring. The slumber-laden Scarlet Poppies are sacred to Thanatos, who guards the portals of death. But the Immortelles typify love that defies Death. Alas, there are no deathless flowers on earth!

Reverently I place my offering on the shrine of a memory. The Soul Triumphant passes on its way. Why should I weep for the dead? Does not the Pathway to the Supreme Goal lead through the Gates of Death?

Dear Comrade on the Trail from Star to Star:
Hail and Farewell! Those of us that knew you
well and loved you will continue to remember.

You await us in the Garden of Asphodel.

AMY DUDLEY.

San Diego, California.

FLOOD-WORK IN NORTH BENGAL.

Piteous tales of sufferings of the people of the Rajshahi and Bogra Districts due to sudden overflowing of the Atrai river are daily appearing in the newspapers. Our workers who have gone there to offer relief have reported us even more heart-rending tales. The worst affected area is the Nowgaon subdivision of the Rajshahi district and the adjoining portion of the Bogra Dt. The whole country-side has taken a desolate appearance. Once flourishing villages cannot now be even located definitely. Nearly 85 per cent. of the houses of the affected area which are mostly built of mud have given way to the onrushing floods. The whole locality is still lying submerged under three to four feet of water. Communication is impossible except by boats which cannot be got. Inhabitants have left their houses and villages and have taken refuge with their families and cattle, and spared belongings on neighbouring high grounds, railways and embankments. There they are living most wretchedly in hastily-erected sheds of grass etc. In one instance a worker of the local relief committee has seen Hindus and Mohamedans numbering 300 with a hundred of domesticated animals to take refuge on a bigha of land. Almost naked and shivering people can be seen everywhere. Cattle are dying for want of fodder. People are in urgent need of food and cloth.

They therefore earnestly requested us to relieve them from their distress. Under the circumstances we have been compelled to take up the whole of the Nowgaon Thana consisting of 340 villages. Besides this we took up before in our hands the Thanas of Raninagar and Nandanali of the same subdivision. In Raninagar we have already opened four centres. Distribution of rice and cloth will take place in a day or two from them as well as in Nandanali Thana. In Nowgaon distribution will also shortly take place after proper organisation and inspection. Details of these will be published later on. In all we have undertaken to offer relief to nearly 700 villages. Our workers estimate this will cause a monthly expenditure of at least 6000 rupees. We hope the sum will not be wanting.

The bulk of the sufferers, nearly 90 per cent.,

are Mohamedans, the rest are Hindus. We shall serve all irrespective of their caste and creed as we are wont to do. But help must be offered immediately, otherwise the flood will end in a disaster. So we appeal to all, specially the Mohamedans, to come in with their mites without further delay. Any sort of contribution, either in money or in cloth which also is in great demand, will be thankfully received and acknowledged on being sent to the following addresses:—(1) Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission, Udbodhan Office, 1, Mookerji Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta. (2) President, Ramkrishna Mission, the Math, Belur, Howrah.

Saradananda.

Sept. 17.

Secy., Ramkrishna Mission.

NEWS AND NOTES.

THE Seventeenth Annual Report of the Rk. Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal (Dt. Saharanpur) is an interesting record of unselfish work done during the year 1917. During the year of its inception the Ashrama had only 42 indoor and 178 outdoor patients, whereas in the year under review as many as 309 indoor and 13,125 outdoor patients have been treated by the Brotherhood, irrespective of caste, creed and nationality. The patients hailed from different parts of India. Of the in-patients, among whom were 166 Sadhus, 278 were discharged cured, 22 left treatment, 9 died and 5 were still under treatment at the end of the year. The out-patients included 2,920 women and 1235 children. Besides ministering to the sick, the Sevashrama, though hampered by want of funds is trying in its humble way to meet another much-feared want, viz. the spread of education among the boys of the depressed classes.

The total receipts of the Ashrama for the year amounted to Rs. 5,620-5-9, and the total disbursements to Rs. 5,664-6-9. The Ashrama is in need of a spacious outdoor dispensary, the present one being insufficient for the purpose, a resthouse for the relatives of indoor patients, accommodation for the Night School, and adequate funds to meet the general expenses. The work that the Ashrama is doing is just the kind of work that India needs to-day to bring back her lost self-consciousness. We hope its appeal for help will meet with a ready response from all friends of suffering humanity.

We are glad to note that the Calcutta Vivekananda Society has completed another year of useful activity in Dec. 1917. The objects of the Society are (1) "to study and realise the principles of the Vedanta in its universal aspect as set forth in the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda and his Master, Sri Ramakrishna Deva; (2) "to spread the above principles and teachings amongst the people at large, and (3) "to serve humanity as veritable manifestations of God by ministering to their physical needs and helping them in their intellectual, moral and spiritual development." These noble aims the Society has been trying to accomplish chiefly by organising lectures and classes, maintaining a circulating library, and undertaking relief works, as far as its means allow. The Society also provides a chapel for meditation and service. Out of its Students' Fund it helped 30 poor students with fees etc. amounting to Rs. 181-8, and its Homœopathic Dispensary treated 169 new outdoor cases. A Society with such high aspirations and conducted under the loving care of a Sannyasin disciple of the Swamiji, aided by able colleagues, is bound to be popular, and it is gratifying to note that the number of members has increased from 118 to 239 in one year. The total receipts of the Society during the year were Rs. 2,779-13, the total expenditure was Rs. 2,170-9, and the balance in hand at the end of the year Rs. 924-1-9. The Society is at present situated in a rented house at 78/1 Cornwallis Street, and needs a permanent accommodation for the efficient discharge of its work. The nucleus of a building fund has been created with the spontaneous contributions of Rs. 116 from some sympathisers. The birthplace of the Swamiji has been aptly chosen as the site of the proposed building, and it is fervently hoped that every admirer of the Swamiji will contribute his mite to the erection of this centre of propagation of his life and teachings. Contributions to the general and building funds may kindly be sent to S. J. Kiran Chandra Dutt, Secretary, at 1, Laxmi Dutt Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta.

SISTER NIVEDITA'S GIRLS' SCHOOL, CALCUTTA.

We beg to acknowledge with hearty thanks the following further donations to the Building Fund of the above Institution:—From *Contai*—Rai Ramapati Mitra Rs. 5, Babus Girish Chandra Ghosh Rs. 5, Ishwara Ch. Dinda Rs. 5, Shiva Prasad Jana Rs. 4. Through S. J. Srinath Sau Rs. 3. A friend through Swami Purnananda Rs. 2-8, Babus Nitya-

gopal Mukherji Rs. 2, Basanta Kumar Dutt Re. 1-0, Sridhar Manna Re. 1, Srinath Sau Re. 1, Nava-kumar Bera Re. 1, Chandra Mohan Maiti Re. 1, Kumud Bandhu Panda Re. 1, Munindra Nath Mandal Rs. 2, Rai Nikhilnath Rai Bahadur Rs. 5, Babus Nilmadhav Dev Rs. 5, Devendranath Hazra Rs. 2, Surendranath Bhoomik Rs. 2, Kenaram Majhi Rs. 2, Bimalkrishna Basu Rs. 2, Ramchandra Das Re. 1, Umeshchandra Midhya Re. 1, Surendranath Pradhan Re. 1, Krishna Ch. Bera Re. 1, Sudhir Ch. Manna Re. 1, Small collections through S. J. Bhupendra Krishna Bannerjee Rs. 2.

Rai M. C. Sarkar Bahadur & Sons Rs. 30; Babus Narendra Ch. Chakravarty, Sylhet Rs. 3; Gaurikanta Biswas, Poona, Rs. 2; Nandalal Basu, Calcutta, Rs. 20; Secretary, Debating Club, Hindu Hostel, Calcutta, Rs. 10; Dr. Durga Prasad Ghosh, Calcutta, Rs. 4; Babus Jadupati Chatterjee, Siliguri, Rs. 25; Ramesh Ch. Dutt, Sakchi, Rs. 2; Messrs. P. N. Dapma, Ahmednagar, Re. 1; A. R. Kumaraguru, Bangalore, Rs. 4; Babus Jitendra Mohan Chaudhury, Ranchi, Rs. 2; "Dutt" Rs. 100; "Kanakanjali" Rs. 4; A lady Rs. 5; Sm. Nirupama Devi, Calcutta, Rs. 5; Babus Upendranath Sen Gupta, Barisal, Rs. 4; "Ramchandra" Rs. 5; Nalininath Mullick, Calcutta, Rs. 6; A friend through S. J. Aghornath Chatterjee, Nalhati, Rs. 10; "Friend" Rs. 3; Mr. P. N. Natesa Iyer, Jalgaon, Rs. 16; Dr. D'Mello, Mandalay, Rs. 50; Babus Radhikamohan Ray, Bhowanipur, Rs. 50; Jatindranath Ghosh, Ranchi, Re. 1; Sir Benode Chandra Mitra, Rs. 25; In memory of the late Kanan Bala Mitra Rs. 10; Babus Pramathalal Bose Re. 1; Radhanath Sinha, Pegu, Rs. 5; Haricharan De, Punjab, Rs. 5; Narendra Bhushan Dutt, Chittagong, Rs. 5; Dr. Aghornath Ghosh, Katihar, Rs. 10; Through S. J. Nalini Mohan Goswami, Bali, Rs. 18-3; Soldiers of the 8th Regiment, Bombay, Rs. 20; S. J. Shashti Ch. Dutt, Sandoway, Rs. 2; Mr. K. S. Iyer, Borneo, Rs. 13-5; Sm. Indubala Devi, Calcutta, Rs. 4; Sm. Sivarani Dasi Rs. 50; Sm. Sarojbasini Sen Gupta, Sandwip, Rs. 2; "Srimati" Re. 1; Mr. N. Sarkar, Bhastara, Rs. 2.

We want thousands of rupees yet for the Building of the School. But India is proverbially a land of charity, and we have every reason to hope that all generous hearts in India and abroad will contribute their quota to this most important work for the education of Indian women. Contributions, however small, will be gratefully accepted and acknowledged by the undersigned.

Saradananda.

Secretary, Rk. Math and Mission,

1. Mukherji Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta.